

# Seekers for Adventure Cross Atlantic Ocean in 47-Foot Sloop

BY RALPH STOCK.

Second of a series of three articles, each recounting a leg of the famous "Crucible of the Dream Ship."

WE all have our dreams. Without them it is in our blood. It is in our blood, the rich man dumps his load of responsibility and lives in a long shack on a mountain top; the poor man becomes rich; the stay-at-home travels; the wanderer finds an abiding place.

For more years than I like to recall my dream has been to cruise through the South Sea Islands in my own ship, and if you had ever been to the South Sea Islands, it would be yours, also. They are the sole remaining spot on this earth that is not infested with big-game shooting expeditions, gloze-trotters or profiteers, where the inhabitants know how to live, and where the unfortunate from distant and turbulent lands can still find interest, enjoyment and peace.

It is no easy matter to find the counterpart of a dream ship, but in the end I found her patiently awaiting me in a backwater of glorious Devon—a Norwegian-built auxiliary cutter of twenty-three tons register, designed as a lifeboat for the North sea fishing fleet, forty-seven feet over all, fifteen feet beam, eight feet draught, built to stand up to anything, and be handled by a crew of three or less. Such was my Dream Ship in cold print.

Having found her, there was the little matter of paying for her. I had no money. I have never had any money, but that is a detail that should never be allowed to stand in the way of a really desirable dream. It was necessary to make some. How?

By conducting a stubborn offensive on the Army authorities for my war gratuity. By sitting up to all hours in a moth-eaten dressing gown and a microscopic flat writing short stories. By assiduously cultivating maiden aunts. By coercion. By—but I refuse to say more.

THE Dream Ship became mine, but what of a crew? Well, I have a sister, and a sister is an uncommonly handy thing to have, provided she is of the right variety. Mine, yeelpet Peter happens to be, for she agreed to forego all the delicacies of the season and float with me on a piece of wood to the South Sea Islands. So also did a recently demobilized officer, Steve, who, on hearing that these same islands were

as a fact, the keel descended on the skipper's toe, extracting a shout of anguish from that usually restrained mariner. The skipper, he it said, repressing his longing to accompany us to the end, had undertaken to pilot us across the Bay of Biscay to Vigo, Spain.

Almost simultaneously, and for no apparent reason, Steve took an involuntary seat on the open skylight, which shut with a crash on one of his fingers.

THE moorings were cast off prematurely, and, getting under way on the wrong tack, we sailed, with the utmost precision, into a neighboring fishing smack, nearly breaking our bowsprit.

I could imagine the grinning heads of the fisherfolk lining the breakwater wall.

"They be goin' ter the South Sea Islands, they be!" I could almost hear them saying, and dive below to show them what a motor auxiliary could do.

There were one hundred and fifty vessels moored in that harbor, and I should not like to say how many we fouled during the next half hour. Indeed, I could not, for throughout the process I was wrestling with the engine, which refused to budge—until we had rounded the breakwater, and there was no further use for it. Such

was the first of our adventures. It was a matter of time before the Dream Ship would be foundering in the North sea, or the South Sea, or the Bay of Biscay, or the Bay of Bengal, or the Bay of the Bering Sea, or the Bay of the Antarctic.

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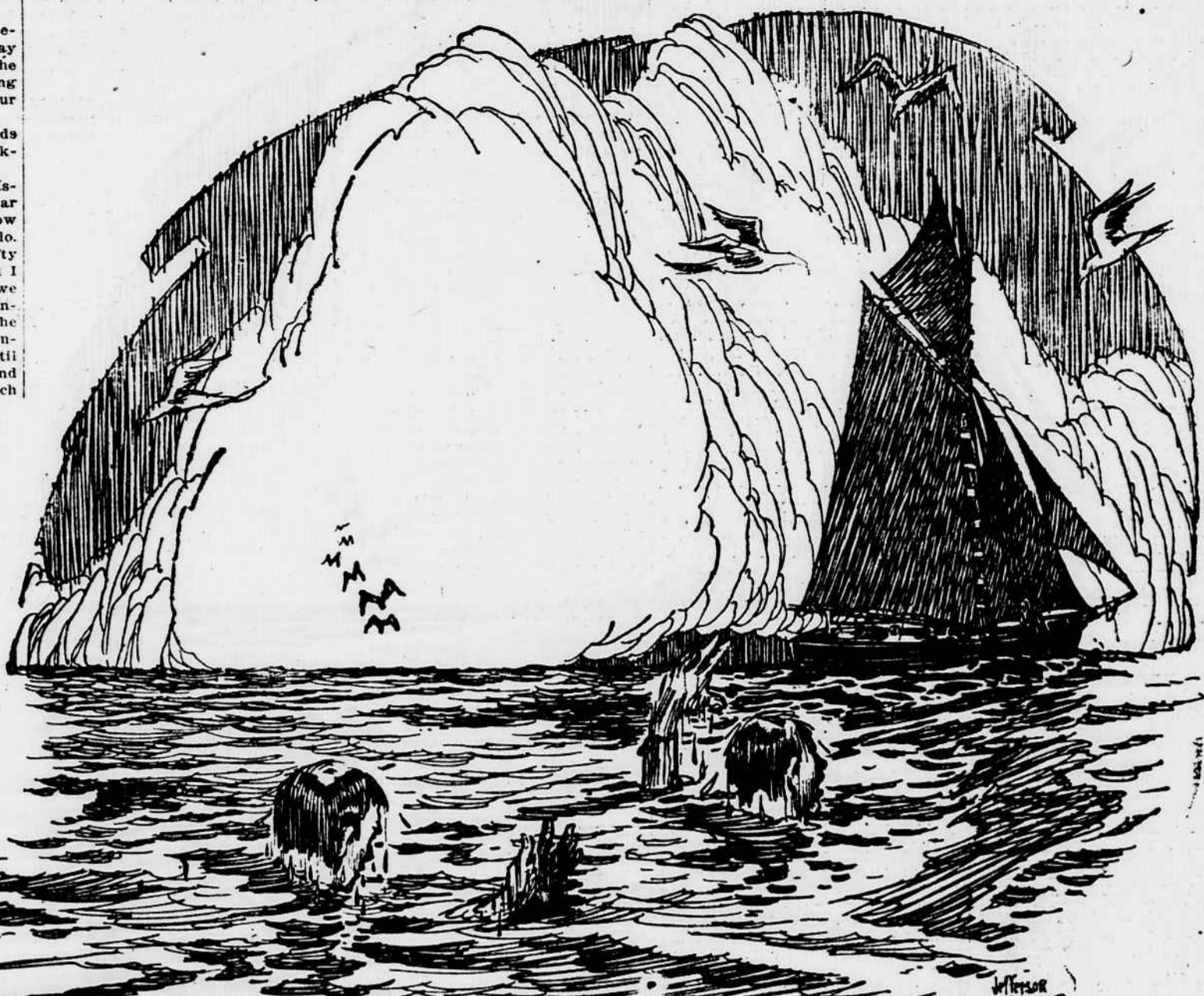
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Getting and Equipping the Dream Ship Proves to Be Big Preliminary Task—Departure From England and Course Through Riotous Bay of Biscay Are Eventful Stages of Voyage. Striking Out on the Limitless Expanse of the Ocean—Craft Slips Away From Swimmers in a Becalmed Sea—Making the Panama Canal on Way to South Sea Islands.



"THE DREAM SHIP WAS LEAVING US IN MID-ATLANTIC. ALTERNATELY, WE YELLED AND SWAM."

not less than three thousand miles from the nearest early-morning parade, offered his services with almost unbecoming alacrity.

At long last there came a day when the shipwright's hammer ceased to resound about the Dream Ship, and save for provisions and water and a snowdrift of unpaid bills, we were ready to take leave of the yards.

With an ebb tide and a veteran skipper, who had taught us some of the rudiments of navigation aboard, we dropped down the river, and as clearly as may be on to a mud bank! I am not going to say how it happened, because I do not know. All we were acutely conscious of at the time was that a yachtman, in his pretty little six-tonner, was approaching down the channel, and that we should have followed, and that not, and that somehow the secret of our dream must have reached his protruding ears, for as he came abreast of us he reared his hideous form out of the cockpit.

"Hello," he cried, "have you made your South Sea Islands already?" We did not answer. There was nothing to be said; but when a tug came up free on the next tide, and founding a bond in the river, we came upon our adversary in precisely the same predicament, we passed him in silence, the most satisfying silence I have ever indulged in.

WITHOUT a dissentient voice the task of choosing and stowing the provisions was relegated to Steve. A woman is so much better at that sort of thing. Steve and I admitted as much, with touching magnanimity.

He drove a cart backed up to the quayside and an active little grocer proceeded to heap the dream ship's deck with comestibles—tinned, boxed and jarred. These we passed through the skylights before an admiring audience of fisherfolk, and, after being ambidextrously conveyed to stow them in the lockers with one hand and make a list of them with the other.

Behold, then, the crew of the dream ship ready to sail, with a combined capital of one hundred pounds sterling and a clearance for Brisbane, Australia, as at 6 o'clock the next morning a small, depressed-looking procession wended its way to the quay, followed by the sidelong glances and whispered comments of the fish market fraternity.

It was the noble army of dream merchants setting forth on its quest. And why depressed? I do not know, except that, personally, on the eve of any problematical undertaking I feel that way, and so, apparently, do others. Perhaps it was that the enthusiasm of ignorance had momentarily deserted us, and we were awed by a rational glimpse of the task that lay ahead.

In silence we rowed out to the dream ship and hoisted sail. I was going to say that in silence we lowered the dinghy on to its chocks, but

is the way of these necessary evils aboard a sailing ship.

Coming on deck, I was confronted with a sorry spectacle. Our port light-board was in splinters. Relics of vessels we had careened in parting littered the deck. The skipper was in the steering well, with the tiller in one hand and his toe in the other, and Peter was administering iodine and lint to Steve's crushed finger.

"She goes!" I triumphed, tactlessly referring to my herculean labors with the engine.

"D'you think it's broken?" demanded the skipper, extending an enormous, bootless foot.

"Flat as a pancake," muttered Steve.

Which gives a fair idea of the trend of individual thought on occasions.

But at last we were off. Off before a seven-knot nor'wester, and with only 12,000 miles to go! What else mattered?

By the time we had picked up an intermittent pallor on the horizon that was Ushant light at a distance of thirty miles the wind had strengthened to half a gale, and there was nothing the Dream Ship loved more dearly than half a gale on the quarter. In a series of exhilarating swoops it flung her down into the Bay of Biscay; but what she did not like was being left there to roll helplessly in a windless swell. I have to call it a "swell," just as I have to say we "rolled," though neither word conveys our subsequent acrobatics in the least.

The Bay has an unsavory reputation, anyway, but for sheer unpleasantness commend me to the mood in which the Dream Ship made its acquaintance.

Literally from beam end to beam end we lurched. The engine was useless. Our propeller was out of the quarter, and under circumstances as much out of the water as in it.

In response to our eternal lurchings, ominous sounds began to filter up from below. A metallic click-clic, click-clic, a methodical clanking, a resounding crash. The first of these proved to be a kerosene tank that had come adrift from its rack fastenings and threatened to fall on the engine. A galvanized iron receptacle containing seventy gallons of liquid is not the easiest of things to handle in a seaway, let alone with a crushed finger. My heart went out to Steve, but it was characteristic of the man that never a whimper escaped him. All that we could do was to wedge the tank into place with stout battens clean across the ship, which we did, and turned our attention to the next calamity. The piano had followed the example of the tank, and the wash-hat case had emulated the piano, and rather than appear peculiar, a 200-pound drum of treasured Scotch oatmeal was rolling on the floor, mingling its contents with the brine that oozed from a crate of salt pork wedged under the cabin table.

The crash was merely the detronement of a lighted stove in the fore-cabin, on which Peter had been

persisting for the last hour, and in spite of her own indisposition, in an attempt to produce something that some one would eat.

On the whole, a healthy lesson in making all secure before sailing. In the midst of our agonies below a stentorian voice hailed us from the cockpit:

"All hands on deck! Lower mainsail!" Which was followed almost immediately by a "crack" like a pistol shot.

Our boom had snapped clean off about five feet from the end.

Such is "the Bay" in lightsome mood. Apparently the only article aboard unaffected by it was the chronometer, ticking placidly in its gimbal and bed of plush. There was something enviable about that chronometer.

THE dawn brought with it a faint but steady breath, and discovering that there was sufficient boom left to set a double-reefed mainsail, we continued on our way, and a blessedly even keel, until toward evening we raised the coast of Spain.

The welcome and unmistakable smell of land came to us over the water, and presently the mouth of the Vigo river opened out, revealing a maze of leading lights.

The engine behaved itself, and by midnight the Dream Ship had anchored off the town, to an accompaniment of star shells and crackers.

It pleased us to imagine that these were our welcome, but as a fact the inevitable Spanish fiesta was in progress. We had made our first foreign port.

Dropping the Skipper there, at the end of seven days' routine, and fair but light winds, we experienced the acute joy of finding land precisely where our frenzied calculations had placed it. As Madeira loomed on the starboard bow, Steve was seen to pace the deck with a quiet but new-born dignity—until hailed below to

help wash dishes. But even this failed to quell the navigator's exuberance, and the dish washer exchanged views on the subject with the helmsman through the skylight. This, then, was the navigation that master mariners made such a song and dance about! Well, we must be master mariners, that was all he had to say! We had summoned Madeira, and Madeira had appeared! We were not at all sure that we had not discovered Madeira!

Next we made the Canary Islands, and then for six mortal weeks we waited at Las Palmas, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the

weather prophets concerning the West Indian hurricane season:

June, too soon.

July, stand by.

August, if you must.

September, remember.

October, all over.

And on the third of this last, reassuring month, we set sail across the Atlantic.

The great adventure had now begun in earnest. Three thousand miles of

countless, almost mechanical actions of a day's civilized existence—but at sea life is composed of such details, and one is thankful for them. Making a long-splice or an "eye," filling and trimming the lamps, washing down deck, or even washing up dishes, all serve to keep the mind from unhealthy conjecture.

Sleep was again our worst enemy at the tiller. Staring into the lighted binnacle with its swaying compass card, or down at the phosphorescent water swirling and hissing past the ship's stern, the helmsman became as one hypnotized. It seemed that

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It will be seen that a dream ship is not all dream. If it were, such is the perversity of human nature, the dreamer would probably be tired of it within a month.

But stark calms are a wearisome business. Every function of a ship has ceased. It is as though she lay dead in a stagnant pool, and any movement of spars or canvas were the rattling of her bones. Also, it is an aggravation to the restless insect-caste of man, adrift in a breathless waste of waters, to know that leagues ahead of which he is incapable of covering a yard.

An auxiliary engine is useless under such circumstances. To use it is like hurrying on to catch a train that is bound to overtake one in the long run. What is a steaming radius of four hundred miles in a stretch of three thousand? No, all one can do, after satisfying himself that his vessel is "as idle as a painted ship upon a painted sea," is to pass the time as pleasantly as may be. We of the dream ship turned in and slept, or broke the uncanny silence with fear-some noises on clarinet and piano. Also, we fished, though with a lack of success that leads me to believe that fish do not bite in mid-ocean. At night flying fish struck the mainsail and fell to the deck with a resounding thwack and a flutter of "reins," but for the most part on occasions when we had failed to hang a lantern in the rigging to attract them, which, as far as I am concerned, explodes another fallacy.

As day succeeded day, and there was no sign of a change in our inert condition, our thoughts turned again in the direction of the drinking water. True, we had two hundred gallons aboard, but what was the time as from being becalmed for a month, or being carried hundreds of miles out of our course by a gale, according to the mood of the capricious elements? We cut our daily allowance from a gallon to half a gallon per head for all purposes and, as though in response to our frugality, a breath came out of the southeast.

At the moment of its arrival Steve and I happened to be testing our sense of direction by driving overboard and trying to come up through a lifebelt floating about ten yards distant. Steve had just conceived the brilliant idea of moving the belt after the diver had taken the plunge, and I had emerged from a lung-racking effort to locate it, when we realized that the dream ship had moved. In fact was still moving, with a noticeable wake in the direction of the horizon. The tiller was pegged amidships, and there was nothing to stop her continuing the motion indefinitely—except Peter, who was below. We prayed in that hour that she was not asleep.

I have often left home—perhaps too often—but this was the first occasion on which home looked as if it were leaving me, and in mid-Atlantic at that. Alternately we yelled and swam, but without gaining a foot until to our infinite relief a small, pajamaed figure appeared on deck, threw up its arms in horror, and brought the dream ship into the wind.

An hour later we were bowling along at seven knots, reveling in the blessed motion of air, and planning what we should do when we reached Barbados, a mere fifteen hundred miles distant.

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to two hundred miles in the twenty-four hours, it took us thirty days to cross the Atlantic, and when it was done we spent the best part of a day trying to find the proof of our accomplishment in the island of Barbados. Faulty navigation again? Yes, but it is not the easiest thing in life to make a "bow on" landfall of a cloud of earth twenty miles by twelve after a three-thousand-mile jaunt to reach it. Also, we suspected our chronometer.

When Barbados, after the fashion of Grand Canary, failed to materialize, we of the dream ship held one of our familiar board meetings. There were two courses open: To emulate the mariner of old, who knew nothing of longitude, and cruise along our latitude until Barbados appeared; or to head for Trinidad instead, and so have the coastline of South America as a buffer if we failed to make it.

We had decided on the latter course, and were actually starting away for Trinidad, when Barbados, a mere wraith of land that we scarce dared to believe in, beckoned us from the southern horizon. We accepted the invitation.

"Look out for the Caribbean sea toward December," was an axiom of a five-masted schooner captain at Las Palmas, but this proved no less fallible over the passage from Barbados to Colon than others he had advanced concerning the Atlantic. In fact, I am thinking of in future asking advice of weather prophets in order to anticipate the reverse.

A spanking wind on the quarter, with mainsail and squaresail set, and a mighty following sea that flung the Dream Ship before it in a series of exhilarating swoops, brought us within sight of land in seven days, a distance of 1,200 miles. But what land?

For a time we were at a loss. Comparing it with the chart and descriptions in "sailing directions" revealed nothing. It was a low-lying, mist-enveloped, sinister-looking land and we sailed along its coast for a day and a night before we could tell whether we had passed Colon or hit the coast to the westward.

Ultimately, a lighthouse gave us the clue, and we found that owing to a current that has the unpleasant knack of running at anything from a half to three knots we were still fifty miles from our objective, so we headed for sea and hove to until daylight.

All night, as we lay rolling in a heavy swell, steamers passed us by, floating palaces of light, and with the dawn we joined the procession of giants making for the Panama canal. We wished to go through the canal? Very well, a measurer would be sent off to decide our tonnage and we must be ready to take the pilot aboard at 5 o'clock the next morning.

That, in effect, is what the canal authorities said, and I answered it with a smile that I trust was sufficiently engaging to hide the fact that I was not at all sure we had enough money between us to pay the tolls. It must be an expensive business, this passing from Atlantic to Pacific. I had never thought of that. There was quite a lot I had not thought about. What if the charges were altogether beyond us? It would mean Cape Horn! Cape Horn or the abandonment of the dream! Which was worse for one who, after sixty below zero on the Canadian prairie, four below zero in France and Belgium and something far worse in coalless London, had taken a solemn oath never again to leave the forties of latitude!

These terrifying reflections were cut short by a voice.

"I can't make it more than twelve tons."

"Twelve tons?"

The canal official deigned to exhibit surprise by slight elevation of the eyebrows, then smiled.

"The measurer has been aboard," he told me, "and you are twelve tons net. The tolls will be \$15. Will you

pay now or at the other end?"

Such was my relief that I paid on the spot, thereby reducing our unutilized capital to \$20—or, at the then-prevailing rate of exchange, \$78.

THIS brief interview with officialdom is typical of Panama canal methods. Speed, silence, efficiency; nothing else "goes" in "the Zone." Things are done in a few seconds and utter silence here that would take hours and pandemonium elsewhere.

The entire miracle of passing a ten-thousand-ton liner from Atlantic to Pacific through seven locks and forty miles of tortuous, ever-threatening channels has been performed in six and a half hours and with a lack of fuss that is almost uncanny.

But the Dream Ship was twelve tons, and not ten thousand, and for that reason it is probable that she gave more trouble than any craft since the canal was opened. Yet on every hand we received the utmost courtesy and kindness. Such treatment made us feel like pestiferous mosquitoes being politely conducted to the door instead of squashed flat on the spot, as we deserved.

At 5 a.m. the pilot came aboard in his immaculate white drill uniform and we entered Gatun lock in style, followed by two more liners.

The giant gates closed. There was an eruption of water, seemingly under our stern, that caused the tiller to fly over and extract a groan of anguish from Steve, as it crushed him against the cockpit well; the aft warp snapped and the Dream Ship commenced to rise, more like an elevator than a ship in a lock, until the blank, grassy wall ended and above it appeared a row of grinning faces.

"That's that," said the pilot, and it was.

By some miracle the engine carried us to the next lock, where the same performance was gone through, with such slight variations as the loss of a hat, three fenders and the remainder of the port covering board.

We passed out into Gatun lake, a fairly place of verdure-clad islets and mist-enveloped reaches, where cranes flew low over the water and strange wild cries came out of the bush.

It was also the place where our engine refused its office peremptorily, irrevocably. I was engineer of the Dream Ship, probably the worst on earth, but still, the engineer, and for an agonized hour I wrestled with lifeless scrap iron.

I have made it a practice to try hard for one solid hour, and, failing to gain a response from the atrocity, leave the matter in other and perhaps more capable hands. I communicated this information to the pilot, and there and then the man's more human side came to the surface. It was raining, as it knows how to rain on the isthmus; he was soaked to the hide; his natty uniform resembled nothing more closely than a dish rag, yet he smiled and proceeded to remove his jacket.

"Guess we'd better sail," he said.

Behold once more the Dream Ship sailing through the Panama canal, alternately scudding before rain squalls, lying becalmed, making tacks of fifty yards and less, a passage surely unique in the annals of "the Zone."

Coming becalmed and with no wireless, it was impossible to summon a tug to take us on our way, but finally a monstrous steamer passed so close that it was possible to hail her, and a few hours later we were taken in tow by an apparition of noiseless engines, shining varnish and gleaming brass.

At last we lay at anchor off Balboa, on the Pacific ocean. We had come far, and the crew of our dream and hoped to go a great deal farther.

A strange life, my masters, but one that I would not exchange with any man on earth.

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"OUR BOOM HAD SNAPPED CLEAN OFF."

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Atlantic ocean lay ahead of us, holding we knew not what of new experience, and for third time since setting sail our undertaking imbued us with a certain amount of awe.

At night, alone in the cockpit, I began to think. Would the drinking water hold out? What if the chronometer broke down? Supposing—it is as well not to think too deeply on occasion, and the crossing of the Atlantic in a small boat is one.

Some one has said that it is the routine of life that keeps us sane, and I am inclined to agree. On shore, one is apt to inveigh against "the little things that must be done"—the

countless, almost mechanical actions of a day's civilized existence—but at sea life is composed of such details, and one is thankful for them. Making a long-splice or an "eye," filling and trimming the lamps, washing down deck, or even washing up dishes, all serve to keep the mind from unhealthy conjecture.

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